

New bursaries to help learners to upskill and retrain

Learners who could struggle with study-related costs such as books and childcare fees can now apply for up to £2.5 million worth of targeted bursary funding to help them access new higher education 'short courses'.

As part of the government's pledge to offer tens of thousands of adults the chance to retrain in later life, gain in-demand skills and open further job opportunities, 22 universities and colleges across England will be offering over 100 short courses to students from this September as part of a three year trial.

Developed with the help of employers, the courses give learners the flexibility to gain an accredited certificate and valuable skills that can be applied in the work place in key areas. These courses that could be as short as six weeks – or as long as a year if studied part-time – in subjects vital for economic growth including STEM, healthcare and education.

To support this flexible study, learners can now apply for tuition fee loans created especially for the short courses to support them for the duration of their study and administered by the Student Loans Company.

Alongside this, bursary grants will be available for learners who need extra financial support to pay for additional costs associated with study. Anyone applying for a loan for one of these 'short courses' who faces financial barriers to their learning could be eligible for a bursary. This includes the costs of learning materials such as books, childcare fees and learning support for disabled students.

Secretary of State for Education James Cleverly said:

This bursary will break down barriers to learning and give everyone the ability to upskill and retrain at a pace which suits them. It doesn't matter what their personal situation or background is.

For too long, our education system has focussed on traditional three-year courses which lock students in and give little flexibility. We are now moving towards a more modern way of learning to provide students with the opportunity to reach their potential whilst meeting the needs of the economy".

Paula Sussex, CEO of SLC, said:

SLC is playing a fundamental role in the delivery of the

Government's HE reform agenda. To deliver lifelong learning, we will be building an entirely new system of student finance for England; providing tuition fee loans for these short courses is an important first step in that process. Along with DfE and sector representatives, we will use this experience to help us support the planned introduction of the government's lifelong learning offers.

The scheme will be part of the data gathering for the wider Higher Education Short Course Trial, which will support the development of the government's lifelong learning offer which will be introduced from 2025. The bursary is for the time-limited trial only, as broader decisions on the lifelong learning maintenance support are still subject to government policy decisions.